



Mr Dougall's Good Stories for Children



HOW NOAH TAUGHT A DISAGREEABLE FATHER A LESSON WHICH MADE HIM A DIFFERENT AND MUCH KINDER MAN

THIS is the story of the bitter punishment of Mr. Phineas Pennywell, who did not see any reason for giving toys to children, and who had no sympathy for the games which his own children played. Mr. Pennywell was pretty old, of course, and perhaps had forgotten what he did and felt when he was young, for he was more than 30 years of age. Yet I know people twice as old who can tell you just what they did when they were 5 or 6 years old.

He never told his son, Oscar, or his little daughter, Edna, any stories after supper, nor did he ever play with them; but he read the newspaper and grunted if they made a noise, and always sent them to bed long before it was time if they laughed or banged their toys at all. He never had any time to spare for romping or singing; nothing seemed to attract him but his newspaper and his cigar. Awful, indeed, were the black looks launched at both Oscar and Edna if they made a noise when Mr. Pennywell was about to take a nap, as he did sometimes, after supper, before he went to the lodge of Exalted and Grandiloquent Sheiks of Beth-peor. It was when he had bestowed such a withering, black glance at them that all this happened of which I am about to tell you.

UNKIND TO THE CHILDREN

Edna had a Noah's ark, and all the animals were strung along the floor in a straggling procession, with Noah in front, and Ham, Shem and Japhet at the rear, driving the caravan. The ark itself was moored against the lounge, upon which Mr. Pennywell had thrown himself to snatch a few minutes' sleep after an early and very hearty supper. Mrs. Noah was at the bow watching her returning family, standing stiffly erect, as usual, with her arms held straight down at her sides. Edna was the only one in the Pennywell family who knew Mrs. Noah from her husband or sons; for to most eyes they were all exactly alike. Edna distinguished her by her especially broad smile, which was rather one-sided also, and a slight cross-eyed effect in the two black spots representing eyes. Beside the ark stood two miniature Christmas trees on round, flat bases, stiff, spiky affairs, but they cast a dense shadow in the brilliant gaslight, and almost completely concealed the one solitary bird that the Noah collection boasted, for it crouched close beneath one of the trees. Mr. Pennywell was almost dozing, and his eyelids were nearly closed, when suddenly he was startled by a motion made by Mrs. Noah. She seemed to wave her stiff right arm toward her husband, as if motioning him to hasten. Mr. Pennywell opened his eyes with a start, and then he was angry at himself for imagining such folly. He thought he had been dreaming.

He was vexed to find himself wide awake, and so a moment later, when little Edna, seeing his eyes open, ventured to speak, he was very cross indeed.

"Papa, why do they have trees on Noah's arks?" she asked.

Her father glared at her as she stood there, with her little finger curled into her dimple, gazing thoughtfully down at the ark and its mistress. He snapped out:

"Don't ask me! There's no sense in such fool things, and they might as well have trees, I suppose, as those lumpy, lop-sided, peg-legged absurdities that you call animals. The man who carved them ought to have six months in the zoological gardens. I think that I'll throw the whole outfit into the fire to-morrow morning."

Edna hurriedly gathered up her precious collection, placed them carefully inside of the vessel and closed the lid in the roof, for she knew that her father was perfectly capable of carrying out his threat.

"It's time you two were in bed, anyway," said Mr. Pennywell, savagely. "I don't suppose I'll get a wink of sleep now."

Edna took the ark up, and was about to carry it to her room, but her father added:

"Here; you just leave that right there. I'll attend to that."

BECAME A MERE MANIKIN

She put the ark on the floor again, and, with tears trickling down her pink cheeks, left the room without kissing him or saying good night. However, Mr. Pennywell never thought of that. He was too busy trying to get to sleep to miss a kiss. In a few minutes his eyes closed, and when Mrs. Pennywell came from the kitchen he was snoring, so she ran in next door to see Mrs. Sutherland's new paper patterns. No sooner had the door closed softly behind her than a voice penetrated to Mr. Pennywell's sleeping senses—a voice that called his name distinctly and in a commanding tone, as if it were the voice of the grand potential patriarch of his lodge, and it sent a sort of crawly shiver through every part of him. He opened his eyes and looked around the deserted room. He saw nothing, and he said:

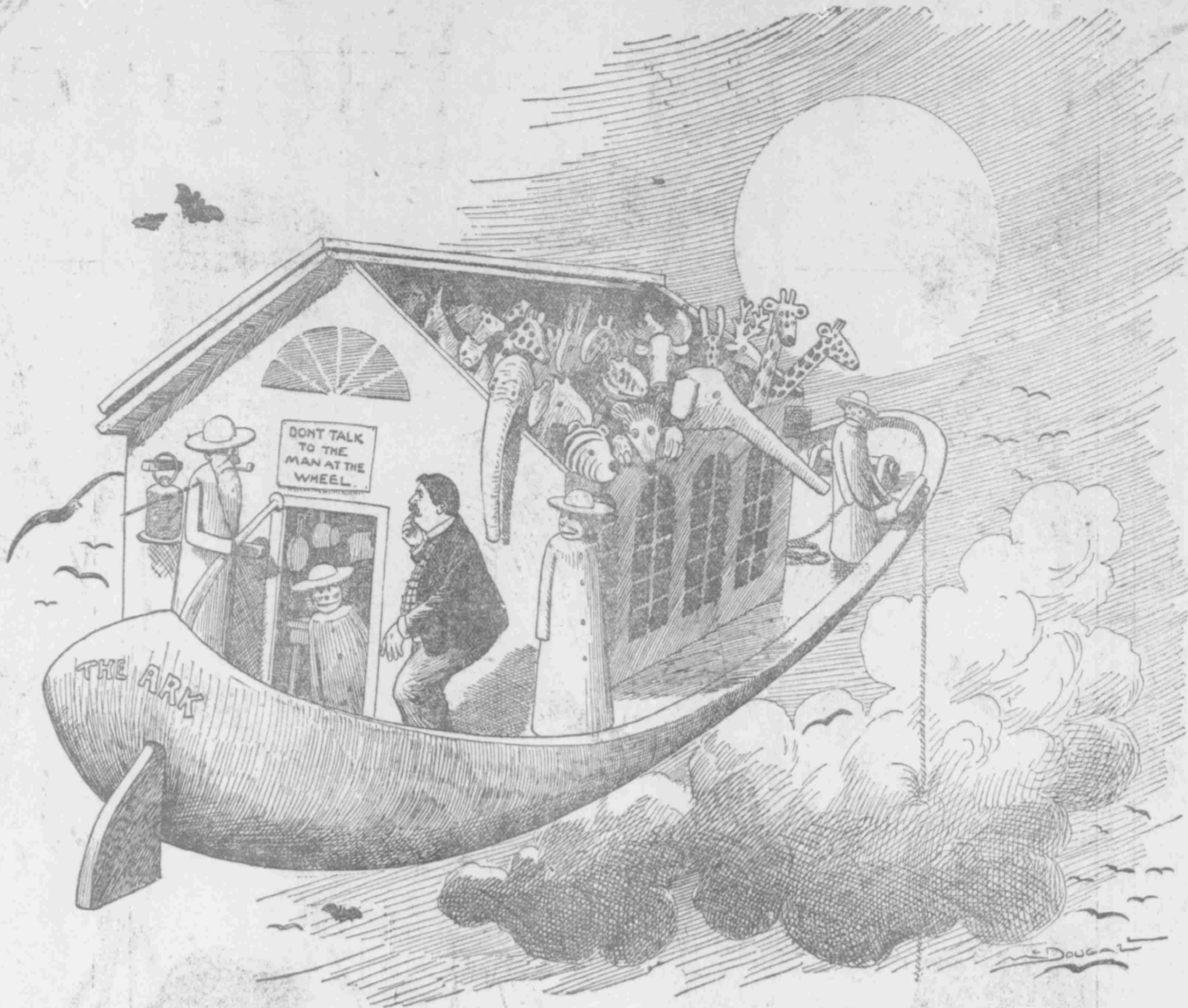
"Pshaw! Dreaming again! Blame it, I'll never get a nap!" Then he heard it again. Right at his feet the voice called out:

"Phineas Pennywell, report on board at once, and be quick about it, or that will happen which you will never forget!"

It was the voice of the grand potential patriarch, sure enough, and here in his house! He sprang up in alarm, for the patriarch must be obeyed instantly, or dreadful things will happen. When he got upon his feet he found himself walking on the lounge, along the edge of it, and then he realized, with astonishment and fright, that he was reduced to the size of a mere manikin! The flower patterns on the chintz cover were so big that he could scarcely step across them, and from the lounge to the floor was twice his height. The roof of the ark was within easy stepping distance, and the starboard lid was open, so that he could slide down it.

Drawn up in a formal line stood Noah, his wife and three sons, looking up at him with stern and severe faces. He could see the animals packed in close together, all peering out at him eagerly, and the awful thought flashed across his mind that he was to be fed to them at once. For a moment he hesitated at the edge of the sofa, holding on by the corded border of the cover, but when Noah spoke gruffly, saying, "Hasten; we are waiting!" he let go and slid down quickly, for he dared not resist that voice.

"Are—are you a grand patriarch?" he tremblingly inquired when he had gained the deck of the ark, for he felt that he must say something, although frightened nearly speechless.



THE SOUNDING LINE SHOWED FOUR HUNDRED THOUSAND FATHOMS

"He asks 'Am I a patriarch?'" said Noah, scornfully, turning to his sons.

"Where were you brought up?" inquired Shem. "Don't you know Noah was the very first, grandest and most potential patriarch of all? First in war, first in flood and first on the top of Mt. Ararat!"

"I—I humbly beg your pardon," said Mr. Pennywell. "I forgot that. Of course, I knew it, but—"

"Don't but me!" interrupted Noah. "We have a goat on board for that purpose. Can you steer?"

"I regret to say I can't," said Mr. Pennywell.

"Can you take soundings, then?"

"No," answered the poor man, becoming frightened again, for Noah's eyes were flashing angrily.

"Well, what can you do on board? Can you take the sun or box the compass or weigh the anchor or splice the mainbrace or wind the dog watch or holy-stone the afterdeck?"

"Alas, I can do none of these things. I am merely a manufacturer of brass bedsteads, and I've never been to sea in my life. I don't know any more about a boat than you do about an automobile," replied Mr. Pennywell, in agony.

"You're a fine specimen of a modern man. I think I heard you commenting awhile since upon the workmanship of the artist who carved these animals of mine. Perhaps you are a bit of a carver yourself?" said Noah, sarcastically.

"I never carved anything—that is nothing but chickens, roast beef and such," answered Mr. Pennywell.

"And yet you criticize the work of other men in the carving line—you, who never carved anything but cooked meat! It's truly time somebody took you in hand before you are completely spoiled, so that you are unfit to associate with nice children like your own. Well, we will try to fit you for their company and make a seaman of you to-night," said Noah. Then, turning to Ham, he added: "How's the tide?"

"Just on the ebb," replied his son. "And the wind is nor'east-by-half-west."

"All right. Weigh the anchor!" said the patriarch. "And you, Japhet, light the port and starboard lanterns, for we don't want to run into that old carpet bag again to-night." Noah turned to Mr. Pennywell and added:

"Go below and put on one of Ham's sea robes. We can't have you wearing such clothes here. You'll find one hanging up on the stag."

SAILED ABOUT THE HOUSE

Mr. Pennywell descended the latter into the Ark, and there saw a deer, upon whose horns hung several different garments belonging to the family. The animal-hatrack stood immovable and made no objection to his taking Mam's gown—a long, yellow garment—and he put it on over his own clothes, just as he did at the Lodge of Exalted Sheiks. Then, feeling the boat lurch and rock from side to side heavily, he hurried aloft again. Noah was steering the craft and looking intently ahead. Mr. Pennywell saw at once that they were sailing down the hallway at great speed, but he could see no water, no matter how hard he looked.

"What are you staring at?" asked Captain Noah. "Watching for a whale?"

"Why, I am looking to see the water," replied Mr. Pennywell.

"Well, stop, for you can't see it. It's invisible water, so there's no use trying to see it. Hi, Shem! Have you taken the temperature of the water yet?" asked Noah.

"Yes, long ago," replied his son. "I took it just about the writing desk buoy."

"Pook! Hottest spot in the house!" said Noah. "Try it farther away from the hot air register. It's a regular Gulf Stream right there. All the fish are parboiled."

Suddenly the Ark tipped, bow down, so sharply that Mr. Pennywell almost lost his footing, and then it sailed downstairs, but at no faster speed. It turned at the foot of the decline and then crossed the hall. Mr. Pennywell expected Captain Noah to tack or come about before he collided with the front door, but he did not even slacken speed. Instead, to his amazement, they went right bang at the oaken door and through it as if it were cloud or fog, which

is the same thing. The door was on a level with the street, and they sailed out into the roadway into the moonlight, that revealed all the animals luddled together in the hall and eagerly glaring at him with hungry eyes, so that he shuddered and turned paler than the moonlight. Noah blew a whistle suddenly, and his sons ran to him promptly. They lined up before their parents at the stern, and the captain, without letting go the tiller, said:

"The time has come to hold the evening services. Boys, have you composed your poems?"

"I have," replied Ham.

"We have managed to make a rhyme or two, but nothing much," said Shem. "Mine's worse than Japhet's, a good deal, but his is pretty bad."

"We always recite new and pleasing animal odes and poemlets at this time," said Noah to Mr. Pennywell, "and you shall be the judge. I've been too busy to-day to make one. Go on, boys."

RHYMES BY THE FAMILY

"Mine's on the mandrill," said Ham. "It's this way:

"A monkey's called a mandrill;
But yet, upon my soul
I do not think it can drill
A man, nor e'en a hole!"

"Not, so bad," said Noah. "Now, Shem, it's your turn."

Said Shem:

"The gnus are very, very old;
How old I cannot say.
And yet the daily news are sold
On newstads every day."

"That's very good," interrupted Mr. Pennywell.

"Listen to mine!" said Japhet:

"Electric lights down in Brazil
Are scouted by the papers;
They say the darkest forests still
Are lighted up by tapers."

"I made another also," he added.

"The mongoose is one of the things
That fools you by its name;
It has no feathers, beak or wings,
But it's a mon-goose just the same!"

Mrs. Noah giggled and said: "I really must recite mine."

"With pig-pens one can't write at all,
They will not carry ink;
Nor does a penguin furnish pens,
As you might really think."

"I've thought of one while you were saying yours," remarked Noah.

"Of hoacoeconstructors you know that
They're snakes—both great and small,
But the jerboa is quite like a rat
And not a snake at all."

"Splendid!" cried Mr. Pennywell, thinking to please them all. "I wonder how you do it!"

"You seem to have some sense, after all," remarked Captain Noah, evidently gratified at the man's appreciation. "Perhaps you have some verses of your own?"

"I can't make verses, but I have a conundrum. What was the first tool used by the monkey?"

"Give it up!" said Noah. "What was it?"

"When the monkey fell off the cocoanut tree he caught himself, but he gave himself a monkey wrench."

"Rotten!" cried Ham. "I guess you'd better stop making riddles."

"It's the best I can do," said Mr. Pennywell, who was sorry already.

There is no knowing what they might have done to him had not Noah suddenly started and quickly put the tiller to port as the Ark narrowly missed striking a lamp-post on the corner.

The vessel turned and tilted upward, but instead of upsetting, as Mr. Pennywell expected, it shot up into the air straight into the starry sky and kept right on as if that was its proper direction. Mr. Pennywell looked down at the lights of the city, now fading away in a dark haze, and wondered if the Ark was going to the moon or some other planet, and he wished to ask Noah to lend him his telescope, but was afraid to do it. Night birds and

bats circled wildly around the craft and looked hungrily at the animals on board, but they did not venture to seize any of them, while dozens of beetles, flies and moths fluttered about the port and starboard lanterns buzzing like saw-mills. After sailing up for a long time in silence, Japhet threw out the lead and shortly afterward sung out: "Four hundred thousand fathoms."

"That will do," said Noah. "Now we will fish." They all dropped fish lines overboard and waited. Mr. Pennywell could no longer control his curiosity and asked:

"Pray, what do you expect to catch away up here in the sky?"

"Starfish, of course. Did you think we were after lobsters?" replied Captain Noah.

"Oh!" stammered Mr. Pennywell, "I forgot about them. I have also heard of moonfish, as well as sunfish, and—Angel fish. I presume you are familiar with both?"

"Yes, but we catch them in nets, not with hand-lines," replied Ham, as his father seemed absorbed in his fishing.

Japhet suddenly started and began to haul in his line. There was no fish on it, however. He exclaimed angrily:

"He took my bait. There's a whole school of them down there."

"Funny time for school to be in," remarked Mr. Pennywell, smiling.

"This is a night-school," replied Ham. "I've got one this time!" he shouted, and quickly hauled up a magnificent, shining starfish. These fish were not like the common starfish of our seashore, which is really not a fish at all, but only an echinoderm; they were real fish with bright tiny stars on their heads like electric lights, and Mr. Pennywell imagined that they might be related to the electric eels. Soon they had caught enough for the family, and Mrs. Noah went into the kitchen or "galley" to get supper ready.

The Ark moved on slowly, but soon stopped again. Noah called out:

"Aho! What's wrong forward?"

Shem, at the bow, replied: "She's run afoul of a cloud and grounded hard and fast!"

"We'll all have to get out and push," said Noah, going forward.

Sure enough, the Ark was aground on a thick white cloud and it took much pushing and pulling to get her off, but finally she was afloat again and sailing merrily along.

"It's almost time to be starting for home, isn't it?" remarked Shem.

SET HIM ON A HARD TASK

"He is anxious to get back to that rubber doll he's so fond of," shily whispered Ham to Mr. Pennywell. "He can't bear to be away from her for more than an hour or two. She's under the lounge waiting for him, I'll bet."

Mr. Pennywell, with a feeling of astonishment, had a distinct remembrance of the doll, although a few hours previous he couldn't have recollected one of Edna's possessions. He wished he was also hiding under the same lounge a moment later when Noah said:

"We have a duty to perform to-night, and that must be attended to at once. Edna's father must be taught to respect us and our menagerie, so that he will not insult us again by criticising our appearance. He knows so much that I will assign him a pleasant task while we are at supper, for he has had his and can't eat again."

"What must he do?" asked Shem, grinning gleefully, for he was the youngest and couldn't control his feelings.

"He must sort over all the animals and match them, two by two, and name them all correctly," replied the Patriarch. "If he fails we will throw him in among them to be devoured by them."

Mr. Pennywell shook with terror, for he well knew how impossible was the task which Noah was giving him. No human being, he thought, could tell which of these curiously misshapen creatures was which, and he knew he would fail. But Noah led him to the open lid and said:

"Here they are, all of them, every kind of beast and beastless, and all you have to do is to call them

A STRANGE TALE OF A VOYAGE IN NOAH'S ARK WHERE EVERYTHING HAD COME TO LIFE AND HE WAS A MIDGET

by name, picking out the pairs of animals, and they will sit aside for the others to be named. It will be easy for such a smart man as you, I'm sure. I'll now go and eat. If you finish before we come on deck, call me. If you fail you will be promptly fed to them, and they are very hungry to-night."

Then he went aft and into the cabin. Mr. Pennywell gazed at the crowd of animals huddled below with feelings that I cannot describe. They all seemed almost exactly alike to him. Even a professional naturalist has been puzzled to distinguish the animals in a Noah's Ark, and what could he do when he knew almost nothing about the animal creation?

He made a mistake the first thing when he pointed at what he thought was a pair of rhinoceroses, and naming them said: "Step aside there and make room."

The he-one roared out:

"I am not a rhinoceros at all. We are Wart-hogs, and any one but a nunny could see it at once."

Mr. Pennywell blushed, and picking up two striped ones said hastily:

"Hurry up there, you tigers. It's easy to tell you, so you—"

ANIMALS WANTED TO EAT HIM

"Huh!" snorted both of the striped ones. "We are zebras, and you are a goose."

"Well," retorted Mr. Pennywell, "you can't blame me, for your legs are too short for a zebra's, I'm sure. However, you two deer can step out," he added, pointing to a pair of apparently-horned beasts near by.

"Excuse me, but we are not deer; we are rabbits, or hares, I forget which," said one of the horned creatures. "These are ears, not horns."

Poor Mr. Pennywell was now too confused to see straight. He asked the blue horses to come out as rats, and the guinea-pigs to masquerade as rations, while he called the tapirs ant-eaters and made them angry. But when he said the axen were polar bears a riot broke out. All of the enraged animals began to growl, howl, roar and grunt, and the giraffes, being tall enough to reach out of the opening in the roof, tried to bite him and almost caused him to fall overboard trying to evade their ferocious attack.

Captain Noah came running along the lee railing with a whip, shouting to the animals to hush, but he had great difficulty in subduing them, and they only became quiet when he promised to feed the man to them at once. The lions and tigers began to lick their chops eagerly, and the bears to whine with delight, while Mr. Pennywell broke out in profuse perspiration. He protested eagerly against such a deed, and warned Noah that the law would be invoked if he was fed to the beasts like a martyr to make a Roman holiday. Noah reflected awhile and seemed undecided, but when Shem whispered to him to stand firm and feed the animals he suddenly said:

"No, I will spare you if you can find one person in all the world who can pick out the animals properly for you. If you can do this I'll let you off."

Mr. Pennywell knew that it would be impossible, or rather he thought so, to find such a person, but he wanted to gain time. He asked Noah to return home at once, and as it was late the Captain agreed. It took only a few minutes to get back in the sitting-room and tie up to the lounge once more, when Shem sprang ashore and vanished.

Just then Edna entered. The noise had awakened her, and recognizing the sounds of animal voices she had hurried to her precious ark.

She was startled to see her father a tiny manikin on the vessel, but when he cried excitedly to her to come to him she knelt down and asked:

"What's the matter, Papa?"

"I am lost!" cried her father, "unless I can find someone who can name every animal and match them at once. It's impossible, but I'm in Noah's power."

"Why, it's easy enough!" she said. "I can tell 'em apart in the dark."

SAVED AND BECAME A BETTER MAN

She rapidly called them all by name and mated them, just as easily as you would real animals, and in a few minutes they were all standing in pairs and very mute and humble, too, for they knew that she was their mistress. The most amazing thing about it all was that the animals that looked most like inoffensive deer, cows or pigs were bloodthirsty and carnivorous lions, tigers, panthers and wolves, and a pair of what her father supposed were foxes turned out to be lambs.

"Now, Mr. Noah," said Edna, "you just let my father go at once, and don't never dare say another cross word to him!"

"I was only fooling," said Noah. "I just wanted to teach him a lesson. Good night."

He went into the Ark and closed the door. Edna went back to bed, and in another minute Mr. Pennywell found himself, as large as ever, on the lounge and the clock was striking twelve.

"Gee whiz!" he cried. "What a narrow escape!" He looked down at the Ark on the floor and added: "I have had enough of Patriarchs to-night, so I'll not go to the lodge, but I'll go to bed."

The next morning Edna told Oscar about a strange dream which she had had in the night, but Mr. Pennywell knew that it was no dream. It had been too real and too trying, and had he wished to have considered it a dream he had but to look under the lounge to see the rubber doll beside Shem on the floor to be convinced that it had really happened. He became a different man from that night, and when he came home in the evening he brought an armful of toys and showed the children how to play with them so cheerfully that Mrs. Pennywell thought he must be sick and going to die. But he didn't; in fact, he was all the healthier for the fact that he used to forget to go to the lodge while he was romping and playing with Oscar and Edna, and the children used to boast that they had the nicest and jolliest father in the whole city.

But I noticed when I was there that the old Noah's Ark had vanished, and in its place was a new and gorgeous one with every animal carved by an expert artist, so that there would never be any mistaking an Eland for an Aard-vark.

WALT McDUGALL